Chapter 9

Marx's Development of the Dialectical Method

9.1 The research method

Marx takes a first step in the development of the specificity of the reproduction of the concrete by thought, opposing 'the peculiar logic of the peculiar object' to the claim of generality of Hegel's logical concept.:

> "In this way, the truly philosophical critique of the present constitution of the State not only reveals contradictions, but *explains them*, understands their genesis, their necessity. He takes them in their *own* meaning. This *understanding* does not consist, as Hegel thinks, in recognizing above all the determinations of the logical concept, but in understanding the peculiar logic of the peculiar object."[1]

The "peculiar logic of the peculiar object" already excludes in itself the possibility of giving logic a general body as the ideal necessity that knowledge must follow, and therefore the possibility for logic to exist by itself. And what else can this "peculiar logic of the peculiar object" be if not the reflection in thought of the development of the specific necessity of the real object itself? However, Marx has not yet fully developed the distinction between ideally produced necessity, logic, i.e., *discursive reason*, which takes the place of real necessity in representation, and real necessity itself. It so happens that Marx has not yet gone beyond the limits of philosophy; so much so that he still identifies the abolition of the proletariat with the realization of philosophy:

> "The *emancipation of the German* is the *emancipation of man*. The *head* of this emancipation is *philosophy*; its *heart*, *the proletariat*. Philosophy will only be realized through the abolition of the proletariat, which cannot be abolished without the realization of philosophy."[2]

But immediately afterwards, Marx advances for the first time on the economic determinations of capital to the point of discovering its condition as a general social relation alienated from present-day humanity. In doing so, he highlights, in an unprecedented way in history, the real need for philosophy

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1. Karl Marx. *Marx/Engels. Werke*. Vol. 1: *Kritik des Hegelschen Staatsrechts*. Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1957, p. 296, own translation.
2. Karl Marx. *Fundamental Works of Marx and Engels*. Vol. 1: *Around the critique of Hegel's philosophy of right*. Mexico City: FCE, 1982, p. 502.

as a concrete form of alienated consciousness. At the same time, he shows how Hegel has developed it to the point of exhausting its power as a concrete, historically determined form of progress in the conscious organization of human action:

> "Hegel takes the point of view of modern Political Economy. He conceives of labor as the essence of man, which proves itself; [...] The only labor that Hegel knows and recognizes is abstract spiritual labor. What, in general, constitutes the essence of Philosophy—the alienation of man who knows himself, or the alienated science that thinks itself—Hegel grasps as the essence of labor, and therefore he can, in contrast to previous philosophy, bring together its various moments and present his Philosophy as Philosophy. What other philosophers did (grasp isolated moments of nature and human life as moments of self-consciousness, or, to be precise, of abstract self-consciousness) Hegel knows as the activity of Philosophy, and therefore his science is absolute."[3]

Marx no longer criticizes logic as a general ideal necessity that displaces a peculiar ideal necessity. He criticizes logic for being an ideal need in itself, which displaces the real need that must be followed through thought to govern one's own transformative action. That is, he criticizes logic for its very essence of *discursive reason* that represents real causality in thought, as a necessary concrete form of alienated consciousness:

> "The philosophical spirit is none other than the alienated spirit of the world that thinks within its self-alienation, that is, that grasps itself in an abstract form. Logic [pure speculative thought] is the money of the spirit, the thought-out, speculative value of man and of nature; its essence which has become completely indifferent to any real determination and is, therefore, unreal; it is the alienated thought that thereby abstracts from nature and from real man; abstract thought. The externality of this abstract thought...».[4]

Externality is not proper to this or that logic, but to logic as such. A little later, always taking as his axis the knowledge of the economic forms of today's society, Marx published his step-by-step critique of what he had already identified as the most developed form of logic, namely, *dialectical logic*. He thus shows how this "absolute method," which starts from the categories (i.e., from the ideal representation of real forms), ends up representing itself first of all as the one that engenders real forms:

> "Economic *phases* or *categories* are sometimes simultaneous in their *manifestations* and sometimes appear inverted in time [...] However, economic theories have their *logical succession* and their *series in the understanding*: it is this order which we boast

3. Karl Marx. *Manuscripts. Economics and philosophy*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1968, p. 190.

4. Ibid., pp. 186-187.

of having discovered" [Quoted by Marx from Proudhon's Philosophy of Poverty].

"Is it surprising that, at the ultimate level of abstraction—because here there is abstraction and not analysis—everything presents itself in the form of a logical category? Is it surprising that, by gradually eliminating everything that constitutes the individuality of a house and abstracting from the materials that compose it and the shape that distinguishes it, we end up with only a general body; that, by abstracting from the boundaries of that body, we result in nothing more than space; and that, by finally abstracting from the dimensions of this space, we end up with only pure quantity, the logical category? By abstracting in this way from every subject all the so-called accidents, animated or inanimate, humans or things, we have reason to say that at the ultimate level of abstraction one reaches the logical categories as substance. Thus, the metaphysicians, who, by making these abstractions, believe they are performing analysis, and who, by moving further and further away from objects, believe they are approaching them and penetrating their essence, those metaphysicians have, according to them, every reason to say that the things of our world are embroideries whose canvas is formed by logical categories. [...] What is surprising, after this, that everything that exists, [...], can, through abstraction, be reduced to a logical category, and that, therefore, the entire real world could sink into the world of abstractions, into the world of logical categories?

'. . . Just as through abstraction we transform everything into a logical category, in the same way it is enough to abstract from every distinctive feature of the different movements to arrive at movement in an abstract state, to purely formal movement, to the purely logical formula of movement. And if in the logical categories the substance of all things is found, in the logical formula of movement one believes they have found the absolute method, which not only explains each thing, but also implies the movement of things.'

... If everything is reduced to a category, and every movement, every act of production, to the method, it naturally follows that every set of products and production, of objects and movement, is reduced to an applied metaphysics.

"What, then, is this absolute method? The abstraction of movement. What is the abstraction of movement? Movement in an abstract state. What is movement in an abstract state? The purely logical formula of movement, or the movement of pure reason. What does the movement of pure reason consist of? In positioning itself, opposing itself, and combining with itself, in formulating itself as thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, or in affirming itself, denying itself, and denying its denial.

"How does reason manage to assert itself, to present itself in the form of a specific category? This is already a matter for reason itself and its apologists.

"But once reason has managed to position itself as a thesis, this thought, opposed to itself, splits into two contradictory thoughts, the positive and the negative, the yes and the no. The struggle of these two contradictory elements, encompassed in the antithesis, constitutes the dialectical movement.

> Yes becomes no, no becomes yes, yes comes to be both yes and no at the same time, no is at the same time no and yes, opposites balance, neutralize, and mutually paralyze each other. The fusion of these two contradictory thoughts constitutes a new thought, which is their synthesis. This new thought again splits into two contradictory thoughts, which in turn merge into a new synthesis. From this process of gestation, a group of thoughts is born. This group of thoughts follows the same dialectical movement as a simple category and has a contradictory group as its antithesis. From these two groups of thoughts a new group of thoughts is born, which is their synthesis.
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> "Just as the group arises from the dialectical movement of simple categories, so too the series arises from the dialectical movement of groups, and from the dialectical movement of series arises the entire system.
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> "Apply this method to the categories of political economy and you will have the logic and metaphysics of political economy, or, in other words, you will have the economic categories known to all and translated into a little-known language, through which they give the impression of having just been born from a head full of pure reason: to such an extent do these categories seem to generate one another, to chain and intertwine with each other solely through the action of the dialectical movement...
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> "So far we have only presented Hegel's dialectic. [...] Thus, according to Hegel, everything that has happened and everything that continues to happen corresponds exactly to what occurs in his own thought. [...] The 'history in chronological order' no longer exists; the only thing that exists is the 'succession of ideas in the understanding.' He imagines that he constructs the world through the movement of thought, but in reality, he does nothing more than systematically reconstruct and arrange according to his absolute method the thoughts that exist in the minds of all men."[5]

But dialectical logic does not fare any better either when one tries to free it from its idealistic inversion and put it into practice in a way that is compatible with the proper development of the real forms whose necessity it seeks to apprehend. In this case, that is, in taking the form of what would later be called dialectical *materialist logic*, it can only succumb to the contradictions that its very external presence engenders in the face of the manifest development of real necessity:

> "Let us now see what modifications M. Proudhon makes to Hegel's dialectic by applying it to political economy.
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> ». . . Hegel does not need to pose problems. It has nothing but dialectics. M. Proudhon has nothing of dialectics but language.
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> ». . . It is no longer dialectics that stands in itself and opposes itself by virtue of its contradictory nature, but it is M. Proudhon who moves, struggles, and agitates between the two sides of the category.

5. Karl Marx. *Marx/Engels. Selected Works*. Vol. 7: *Miseria de la filosofía (Poverty of Philosophy*). Buenos Aires: Editorial Ciencias del Hombre, 1973, pp. 71-74.

> "Thus, placed in a quagmire, from which it is difficult to get out by legal means, M. Proudhon makes a desperate effort and leaps into a new category. Then the series appears before his astonished eyes in the understanding.
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> "He takes the first category that comes to hand and arbitrarily attributes to it the property of eliminating the inconveniences of the category he is trying to purify.
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> . . .
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> "'In absolute reason all these ideas [...] they are equally simple and general [...] In fact, we do not arrive at science except by erecting a kind of scaffolding with our ideas. But truth itself does not depend on these dialectical figures and is free from the combinations of our spirit." [Quoted by Marx from Proudhon's The Philosophy of Misery]
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> ». . . . The idea can no longer either situate itself in the form of categories or be decomposed into them. The succession of categories becomes a kind of scaffolding. Dialectics is no longer the movement of absolute reason. Of dialectics there is nothing left, and in its place we see at most pure morality.
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> "When M. Proudhon spoke of the series in the understanding, of the logical succession of categories, he positively declared that he did not wish to expound history in chronological order, that is, according to M. Proudhon, the historical succession in which the categories have manifested themselves. Everything happened to him then in the pure ether of reason. Everything had to be detached from this ether by means of dialectics. Now that it is a question of putting this dialectic into practice, reason betrays it. M. Proudhon's dialectic renounces Hegel's dialectic, and M. Proudhon is forced to recognize that the order in which economic categories are set forth is not the order in which they engender each other. Economic evolutions are no longer the evolutions of reason itself.
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> "What, then, does M. Proudhon present to us? Real history, that is, as M. Proudhon understands it, the succession in which the categories have manifested themselves in chronological order? Even less. Therefore, it does not present us with either the profane history of the categories or their sacred history! What history does it offer us, after all? The history of its own contradictions".[6]

Shortly before the publication of the above, Marx had already synthesized the opposition between interpreting the world and transforming it, that is, between producing a knowledge that stops at the appearance of real necessity and producing a society in which the full consciousness on the part of its members of their own determinations as such is the general social relation:

> "«Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it."[7]

Marx finally presents in a direct way what he refers to as "the true scientific method", *the dialectic* established correctly after the Hegelian inversion, and

6. Ibid., pp. 75-77.

7. Karl Marx. *Marx/Engels. Ausgewählte Werke*. Vol. 1: *Thesen über Feuerbach*. (11th thesis on Feuerbach). Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1985, p. 200.

defines his product as *the reproduction of the concrete by thought*, which he specifically opposes to representation:

> "The concrete is concrete because it is the synthesis of multiple determinations, therefore, the unity of the diverse. It appears in thought, therefore, as a process of synthesis, as a result, not as a starting point, although it is the true starting point, and therefore also the starting point of intuition and representation. In the first way [analysis], full representation was condensed into abstract determination; in the second, abstract determinations lead to the reproduction of the concrete by the way of thought."[8]

In *The Science of* Logic, Hegel constantly presents the difference between *representation*, where knowledge develops following a necessity external to its object, and *dialectics*, where knowledge develops by accompanying the development of the necessity of its object. Only Hegel represents the necessity that follows the process of thought itself as the one that determines all real need. He thus inverts dialectics, representing it as *speculative thought*:

> "That is why Hegel fell into the illusion of the real as the result of thought that is concrete in itself, deepens in itself, moves by itself, while the method of rising from the abstract to the concrete is, for thought, nothing other than the way of appropriating the concrete. to reproduce it as a spiritual concrete."[9]

The science inherent to capital, insofar as it is determined as a mere process of producing relative surplus value, and Marxism in particular, have taken care to erase all trace of the difference between representation or conception (every conception begins by somehow representing its elementary concepts) and reproduction, simply by ignoring it in the crudest way. On the contrary, Marx does not hesitate to acknowledge its root:

> "The mysticism in which dialectics is enveloped in the hands of Hegel does not prevent him, absolutely, from being the one who first set out its general forms of movement in a comprehensive and conscious manner. Hegel turns dialectics upside down. One only has to turn it around to discover the rational core beneath the mystical shell."[10]

Let us repeat verbatim what has already been said about the specificity of dialectical knowledge. The difference between the *representation* and the *reproduction* of concrete reality through thought is not exhausted by the mere

8. Karl Marx. *Marx/Engels. Ausgewählte Werke*. Vol. 2: *Einleitung ⌈zu der "Grundrissen der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie"⌋*. Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1985, p. 486, own translation.

9. Ibid., p. 486.

10. Karl Marx. "Postface to the Second German Edition". In: *Capital*. Ed. by F. Cao and D. De Val. Vol. 1. Madrid, 1898, p. 15.

statement of the necessity that each follows in its development. This difference pertains to the very form of the double path that integrates each of them. The analysis proper to representation separates abstract forms according to their degree of repetition. It thus focuses on the exteriority of these abstract forms. By contrast, the analysis that will provide the basis for the reproduction of real necessity through thought separates the concrete form it encounters from the necessity it carries within itself, as the other whose realization determines it. That is to say, it takes shape in the discovery, within the concrete form (and as such, realized necessity), of its abstract form (and as such, necessity to be realized). The return to the concrete forms that follows the analysis that has stopped at the exteriority of abstract forms becomes inevitable in the addition of non-repetitive forms, and consequently previously excluded forms, to the representation. This process has no necessity to follow except the purely constructive necessity dictated by its logic. By contrast, the reproduction of reality through thought advances according to the development of the necessity that the simplest abstract form carries within itself. As soon as this abstract form realizes its necessity, meaning it affirms itself as an abstract form, it negates itself as such an abstract form to affirm itself as realized necessity, or as a concrete form. But this concrete form immediately negates itself as such, affirming itself as a form that carries within it a necessity to be realized, that is, as a new abstract form. The reproduction of the concrete through thought thus ideally accompanies the development of its real object. It reaches its end when it ideally attains a form of this object that has its current concrete existence as mere necessity to be realized, and this necessity to be realized is driven toward transformative action, determined as an action that has had to follow this entire path to become a conscious action, as the necessary form for realization:

> " In its mystical form, dialectics was fashionable in Germany because it seemed to glorify what exists. In its rational form, it is a scandal and horror for the bourgeoisie and its doctrinaire followers; because in the positive understanding of what exists it includes the comprehension of its negation, of its necessary downfall; because it [focuses] everything in motion, and also, therefore, as forms it perishes and is transient; because nothing can dominate it, and it is essentially critical and revolutionary."[11]

As a conscious way of organizing human action, dialectical knowledge always starts from immediately confronting the potentiality of one's own action with respect to the potentiality that its object has to be transformed into an object for oneself. It starts, therefore, from the immediately observable unity between necessity itself and the potentiality of the object.

When the action is going to be exercised on a simply natural object, it becomes obvious that the process of knowledge needs to relate the human natural potentiality with the natural potentiality of the object. On this basis,

11. Ibid.

the externality of the ideal necessity that structures logical representation allows us to believe that the whole process of knowledge is going to unfold in the field of simply natural forms, that is, that it is a process abstractly proper to natural science. However, it is clear that the human powers to transform nature are an attribute of social labor and, therefore, that the consciousness that governs human action on natural forces passes through the consciousness with respect to the social forms with which this action is organized.

Conversely, when it comes to a human action that is immediately aimed at a purely social relationship, logical representation seems to suggest that the unity of the knowledge process is exhausted within the social forms themselves. It then seems that this is the object of a social science separate from natural science. However, social forms are nothing but the specific modality that governs the process of human metabolism. This is a natural process whose specificity is determined by the universal consumption of natural objects mediated in their condition as use-values through social labor. Thus, the organization of social life, which originates from the allocation of social labor under its various determined concrete useful forms, is nothing but the humanly specific way of organizing the materiality of the natural human metabolism process. The production of scientific consciousness that governs the organization of social life can only advance by analytically penetrating the domain of merely natural forms until it discovers the materiality of the necessity of its own action. Then, this production can only advance ideally accompanying the unfolding of this materiality until it determines social action, which it itself governs, as the necessary concrete form to realize that materiality. In dialectical knowledge, the analytical advance from social forms to material forms and the synthetic return from material forms to social forms develop seamlessly because human nature and the humanization of nature are one and the same.

In historical development, this unity can only be directly manifested as an attribute of the science which governs the organization of the revolutionary action of the working class: the immediate object of this action is the general conscious organization of the materiality of social labor:

> "Industry is the real historical relationship of nature (and, therefore, of Natural Science) with man; that is why, by conceiving it as an esoteric revelation of essential human forces, one also understands the human essence of nature or the natural essence of man; in this way, Natural Science loses its abstract, material, or rather idealistic orientation, and becomes the basis of human science, just as it has already become (although in an alienated form) the basis of real human life. To provide one basis for life and another for science is, therefore, from the very outset, a lie. Nature that develops in human history (in

> the act of the birth of human society) is the true nature of man; hence, nature, as it develops in industry, albeit in an alienated form, is the true anthropological nature.
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> "Sensibility (see Feuerbach) must be the basis of all science. Only when it starts from it in the dual form of sensible consciousness and sensible necessity, that is, only when it starts from nature, is science truly science. All of History is the preparatory history of the conversion of 'man' into an object of sensible consciousness and necessity. History itself is a real part of Natural History, of the conversion of nature into man. One day, Natural Science will incorporate the Science of man, just as the Science of man will incorporate Natural Science; there will be a single Science.
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> ... The social reality of nature and human natural science or natural science of man are identical expressions"[12]

9.2 The method of exposition and its critical reading

Dialectical knowledge results from the unity of the process of analysis and synthesis. But it is strictly in this second phase that thought accompanies the unfolding of the real necessity of its object. Therefore, it is in it that the ideal reproduction of it emerges:

> "It is, in reality, much easier to discover by analysis the earthly kernel of the misty creations of religion than to do the opposite, i.e. to develop from the actual, given relations of life the forms in which these have been apotheosized. The latter method is the only materialist, and therefore the only scientific one."[13]

The ideal reproduction of the concrete takes on a socially objectified existence in its presentation. Dialectical research cannot overlook any form relevant to the development of the potentiality of the concrete object that will be realized through action. However, a critical reading of the presentation of dialectical research implies the reproduction of the research process itself by the reader. If the reader is satisfied with the reading itself without independently engaging in the reproduction of the actual forms in question, what results cannot go beyond being a representation. At best, it is a representation that includes the notion that the original researcher must have reproduced those actual forms.

Marx ideally and originally reproduced the specificity of the capitalist mode of production, until he discovered its historical necessity to generate the conscious general organization of social life. And he gave a socially objectified form to this consciousness in Capital. To the extent that any subsequent process of knowledge regarding current social forms necessarily passes through what was thus determined as their general course, it is determined as a process of

12. Marx, *Manuscripts. Economics and Philosophy*, pp. 152-153.

13. Karl Marx. *Das Kapital*. Vol. 1. Frankfurt: Ullstein Verlag, 1981, p. 331, own translation.

recognition from the social point of view. But, emphasizing what we have already said, for the same reason it is not a question of reading Capital; or even of studying it. It is a question of confronting for ourselves the real forms of capital in search of the concrete necessity of our own action, until we can consciously govern it by having ideally reproduced its potentiality. And it is in this process that Capital serves us as a tool that indicates the path along which we can advance more efficiently. The concrete determination that took the life of the original investigator to reproduce through his thought can be reproduced by the researcher who develops his process of individual knowledge as a process of recognition from a social perspective, with substantially less difficulty and time. Thus, he is in a position to advance in his own process of original knowledge in the ideal reproduction of real concrete forms unattainable for the primitive original researcher.

This form that the unity between already produced dialectical knowledge and its critical reading takes, frees the exposition from the necessity of strictly presenting each of the relationships through which the research had to pass. It is enough that the links on which the critical reproduction of the research can be sustained appear in it.

In the actual process of reproduction, the research ideally needs to unfold the determinations of the real concrete object of the investigation, starting from its simplest concrete form. Given its own purpose, the presentation does not need to go back to this point. Its starting point is located directly at the simplest concrete form that specifically concerns the original process of knowledge in question. At most, a synthetic presentation of the determinations whose realization is already evident in this simplest specific concrete may be appropriate, in order to highlight those that are key to the new original development to be undertaken. The presentation then ideally accompanies the realization of the necessity immanent to the simplest specific concrete, asserting itself through its own negation. Thus, the presentation shows this concrete, the object of the investigation, as a subject bearing the necessity of its own movement. It accompanies it in the realization of this movement up to the point where it asserts itself through its own negation in a more developed concrete form of its own, which carries a necessity to be realized that is specifically its own. At this point, the generically inherent necessity of the simplest concrete has been revealed as the necessity to be realized by a specific concrete form of that same concrete. Now, the presentation continues its course working with this specific concrete form in a manner similar to that followed with the simplest one. That is, a new expository node opens based on the specific concrete form whose determination was unfolded in the previous node.

Each concrete form that is discovered in the development of the metamorphosis of the subject's generic capacity determines the existence of the corresponding expository node:

> "Without a doubt, the mode of exposition must be formally distinguished from the mode of investigation. Investigation must appropriate the subject in detail, analyze its different forms of development, and unravel its internal thread. Only after completing this work can the actual movement be properly presented. Once this is achieved, and if it then ideally reflects the life of the subject, it may seem as if one is encountering an a priori construction."[14]

It is appropriate to emphasize that, due to its very form, the exposition does not correspond to an abstract genesis of the concrete. Marx warns himself about the risk of fostering this inversion.:

> "At another time, before leaving this problem, it will be necessary to correct the idealistic way of presenting it, which gives the impression of dealing purely with conceptual definitions and the dialectic of concepts. Consequently, the statement must be criticized above all: the product (or activity) becomes a commodity; the commodity, exchange value; the exchange value, money."[15]

Thus, for example, it is not the case that, as we progress, the commodity itself from which we started generates determinations that were not present in it when we discover it as the simplest specific concrete form in which wealth appears in societies where the capitalist mode of production prevails. On the contrary, these determinations were already fully developed in it, since it itself was a product of capital. It is only that they were not visible to us when confronting the commodity in its immediacy as such. So, for example, it is not the case that the commodity we encounter as the simplest specific expression of social wealth in the capitalist mode of production has its exchange value determined simply as a product of labor, and that later the effective incorporation of the capitalist character of production generates its exchangeability as a product of equally valorized capitals, that is, determines its exchange value as production price. It is the other way around. The 'sum of commodities' from which we start is nothing more than the immediate form that presents to us the unity of the movement of social capital governed by the formation of the general rate of profit, where this formation is the concrete way in which the contradiction between the generic form of capital as value that valorizes itself without enclosing any qualitative difference within it and its effective differentiation in the production process as variable and constant capital is resolved. All this complexity is already present in the commodity when we confront it for the first time. The thing is that we have no other way of discovering it than by confronting it in the immediacy of its simplest determination; and this can only reveal the commodity as a simple product of

14. Marx, "Postface to the Second German Edition," p. 12.

15. Karl Marx. *Fundamental Elements for the Critique of Political Economy* (draft) *1857-1858*. Vol. 1. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1972, p. 77.

social labor carried out in the concrete form of private labor. Moreover, it is only through the development of the determinations immanent in the commodity thus known that we can come to discover the complexity of the commodity as the product of capital in its entirety. Therefore, if we were to stop the advance of our knowledge in the commodity as a mere product of labor, we would not find that our knowledge has stopped in an abstract form that does not exist as real concrete. Our knowledge would have stopped at a particular appearance presented by a real concrete.

Moreover, the same relationship between the original research and its critical reading of the reproduction of the concrete by thought allows us to give particular forms to the necessarily nodal structure of the exhibition. Let us dwell very briefly on the one given by Marx in *Capital*, in a finished form in the first volume. He begins by confronting an expository form that, for the moment, has no other justification for its necessity as a subject than the fact that it is placed there as such; or, more precisely, that it is placed there as a mere object. So, the first step in the exposition of the need of this subject is the exposition of the analysis of it, starting from the exteriority in which it is placed. This analysis begins by following a series of courses that appear open to him, and in this very follow-up he comes to highlight the purely apparent nature of such courses. He does so by showing that they are only the result of a circular turn, without ever transcending the analytic path, to the starting point. Only then does the analysis advance along the course that presents itself as another possible one along with the apparent ones followed above, but which, far from immediately rebounding to the starting point, extends to the point of exposing the necessity that specifically defines the subject under consideration as such a subject. The process of investigation from which this discovery has truly resulted thus appears, in the exposition as if it had been an abstractly analytical one.

Once the need for the specific realization of the subject is shown, the exposition accompanies its unfolding, that is, the development of the concrete forms of the subject. This is what the exposition does until the subject develops into one or more specific concrete forms that have the need inherent in the initial simple form, not merely as a need that determines them as such concrete forms, but as a need to be realized that is proper to them. By showing its need in this way, the specifically considered subject takes upon itself the task of making evident, by itself, that need which was its original one—at first only visible in analytical exposition, and therefore external to it as such a subject—as properly its own. The exposition of the unfolding of the need of the specifically considered subject thereby justifies the necessity of its own starting point.

Having reached this level of progress, the exposition no longer simply continues flowing in the development of this renewed need of the subject; that is, developing the metamorphosis of the concrete forms of the subject, into subjects themselves. Rather, the exposition goes directly to confront the specific form of the subject that is the already realized realization of such a necessity, from the very exteriority of this form appearing on its own account. With this opening of a new node, the formal cycle of the exhibition begins.

Capital thus begins by confronting us with the commodity with no other manifest reason for doing so than being, the commodity, the elementary form of wealth in capitalist society. The subsequent analysis shows that the specificity of the commodity, namely, its aptitude for exchange, lies in the private and independent character of the social labour that produces it. But this very discovery shows that analysis cannot account for the need for this specificity. The presentation of the analysis leaves room for the very development of the expression of the value of the commodity in the exchange relation to reveal the commodity as the materialized social relation through which private and independent producers – who lack any direct control over the social character of their labor – resolve the allocation of their total labor power to the production of the different values of social use.[16]

In this unfolding, which is proper to it, the commodity succeeds in showing the formal necessity of its determination as money, that is, of the concrete form of the commodity, which is nothing other than the direct materialization of social labor. Far from its initial abstract immediacy, and even from its analytical exteriority, the commodity is now shown in the exhibition in the form of the representative of the general social relation in the autonomously governed human process of social metabolism. It shows, therefore, to affirm itself as such a relationship. In doing so, it shows that the free consciousness of private and independent producers is nothing but the concrete form of their consciousness alienated in the social powers of the commodity itself.

The process of exchanging commodities is the realization of this social relation. It opens, as such, a new expository node, a new chapter. But the process of exchanging commodities does not affect this opening by presenting itself directly as a renewed form of the subject, but from the pure exteriority of the latter: 'commodities cannot go to the market by themselves.' It is from this

16. Marx sums it up as follows:

"As we see, everything that the analysis of the value of the commodity told us before, the linen itself tells us now, as soon as it comes into relation to another commodity, the jacket. Only he expresses his thoughts in the only language with which he is familiar, the language of commodities" (Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1, p. 33).

renewed immediate observation that the exposition again takes analytical form. But now analysis quickly shows that the will of the possessors who bring them to market is nothing but the personification of the social powers of the commodities themselves. And the analysis of this consciousness confronts us with the evidence that, however independent the owners of commodities may be, their individual consciousness can only be determined as the personification of their commodities in the social unity of their movement. Now, it is this social unity that is set in motion in the unfolding of its necessity as a historical process from which the commodity itself emerges as the product of socially necessary abstract labor performed privately and independently, and money as the unique necessary expression of social labor thus performed.

The movement, no longer historical but actual, of commodities in the process of exchange, the circulation of commodities, opens up a new expository node. This again starts from the immediate observation of the attributes with which money is presented as a condition for circulation, advancing in the analysis of them as a measure of value and a price standard. It is only then that the exhibition advances again, unfolding the necessary movement of commodities in circulation that determine the functions of money, no longer as its premises, but as its necessary concrete forms. Money thus attains the concrete forms in which commodity production has as its immediate object the production of the general social relation: money as treasure, means of payment, and world money. The necessity of the production of the general social relation as the proper end of commodity production, externally manifested when we look at the process of circulation in its abstract immediacy, is now manifested in the exposition, no longer as a generic necessity of money, but as a necessity inherent in its concrete functions. Marx thus places us on the threshold of the full form of value production: the production of value by means of value itself, the valorization of value. But the exhibition crosses this threshold in a way that is not directly manifest, placing itself before the immediate externality of the valorization of value. Needless to say, the exhibition opens a new formal node here, facing the simplest expression of the cycle of capital.

This particular way of structuring the exhibition incites the critical reader, who as such reproduces with his own thought the unfolding of the necessity of the subject about which *Capital* is about, to follow on his own the internal movement that encloses the expository leap from one node to another, critically developing the real necessity present there. At the same time, it has the virtue of constantly making it evident that dialectical knowledge does not have as its starting point a concept or category to be developed, but rather starts from confronting a concrete in its immediacy. Each chapter demonstrates

by itself the complete unity of the dialectical method of research.[17]

It is worth noting here Marx's advance in the unity of research and exposition from the *Manuscripts of 1844* to *Capital*. In the *Manuscripts*, Marx puts for the first time the economic forms of society as the axis of development. But he does not do so by starting from themselves, but from the categories or concepts with which political economy represents them. Then, he advances critically on these concepts until he shows that they inevitably lead to the evidence of the alienation of labor as an attribute of its own product, in the capitalist mode of production. He also discovers that alienation arises from the private character of labor: private property – the general concrete form of alienation – is always present as the result of private labor.

But this course shows its limit when it comes time to establish the historical reason for the existence of the capitalist mode of production and, therefore, the necessity of its overcoming. Marx has followed a path that only allows him to present these founded determinations in an abstractly "dialectical" manner. Above all, the development of the private character of labor appears to him as rooted in the abstract exercise of the human generic being: conscious action exercised upon the environment to transform it into a means for human life—labor—necessarily acts upon an external object, it objectifies itself. Then, to express the fullness of its powers to objectify itself, the human generic being negates itself as such conscious action in order to affirm itself as an alienated action. And only by reaching the fullness of its alienation does the moment arrive in which an abstract negation of negation comes into play: full alienation in the object generates the scientific consciousness that ultimately frees itself from alienation. At the same time, Marx develops in parallel another movement of negating the negation by having carried it to its extreme: by working privately, the worker produces such misery for himself that he finds it unavoidable to rise up against capital.

In *Capital*, Marx does not start from the categories of political economy. More than that, he does not start from any category at all. He begins with the immediate observation of the simplest concrete in which the alienation of human labor is materialized as a social attribute of its material product, namely, the commodity. *Capital* does not move toward alienation, but rather starts from it under its very concrete material expression. It is, in itself, the unfolding of alienated consciousness in the process of discovering its own alienation. Therefore, what it does is accompany the development of the concrete form of existence of alienated consciousness, until it discovers it in its necessity as an objectified social relation that has become the concrete subject of social life, that

17. ". . . and the reader who, after all, wants to follow me, must decide to ascend from the singular to the general." Marx, *Einleitung ⌈zu der "Grundrissen der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie"⌋*, p. 501, own translation.

is, as capital. It is then revealed how, in its movement as an alienated subject which contains no immediate need other than the production of more of itself, capital continually revolutionizes the material conditions of the labour process. And we see how this alienated transformation of the materiality of labor develops in a complete way by imposing the general conscious organization of social production and consumption. That is, we see how the material development of the labor process governed by capital ends up determining the alienated consciousness of the collective worker who performs it, and its direct action as a class, as the consciousness and action of the subject who, as alienated as an attribute of capital, is forced to deny its own alienation.

By its form, the positive exposition of the movement of capital as a historically specific alienated social subject is the critique of political economy. As such, it is capable of accounting for the necessity of political economy as a scientific expression of the alienated consciousness that sees itself as an abstractly free consciousness and that therefore has no way of ceasing to be, at the same time, a purely ideological consciousness. And it is capable of giving an account of its own need, in its condition of an alienated consciousness that discovers itself in its own alienation and takes into its hands the historical powers that such alienation imposes on it:

> "It is not a question of knowing what this or that proletarian, or even the entire proletariat, proposes momentarily as an end. It is a question of knowing what the proletariat is and what it must do historically according to its being."[18]

18. Karl Marx. *The Holy Family, or Critique of Critical Criticism*. Ed. by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Buenos Aires: Editorial Claridad, 1971, p. 51.